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ABSTRACT

Those who work in the field of preserving Native American languages are an assortment of individuals who come to the work as a central career (linguists), through family heritage (fluent speakers), or through a developed passion (language learners). This paper examines the field from the perspective of R. Wayne Pace, Phillip C. Smith, and Gordon E. Mills (1991). They define a profession as having a defined area of competence, an organized and important body of knowledge, identification as a career field, controlled access for competent individuals, principles and practices supported by research, professionals involved in academic programs, a program of continuing education, and graduates who exercise independent judgment. This paper looks at each of these areas in turn as they relate to teachers of indigenous languages and other community human resources, with the view of documenting that the profession is worthy of recognition and certification by states and tribes. Within the extensive body of knowledge related to language preservation, 11 roles are defined: program or tribal administrator, evaluator of language preservation, human resource development manager, individual career development advisor, instructor or facilitator, marketer, materials developer, needs analyst, organizational change agent, program designer, and researcher. Associations interested in Native language issues and available college programs are discussed. Contains 10 references. (Author/SV)

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Language Preservation and Human Resources Development

Joyce A. Silverthorne

ED 415 068

And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. — Desiderata

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Each profession is unique unto itself. This is also true of those of us who work in the field of preserving Native American languages. We are an assortment of individuals who have come to this work either as a central career (linguists), a family heritage (fluent speakers), or a developed passion (language learners). This paper examines the field from the perspective of R. Wayne Pace, Phillip C. Smith, and Gordon E. Mills (1991). They define a profession as having a defined area of competence, an organized and important body of knowledge, identification as a career field, controlled access for competent individuals, principles and practices supported by research, professionals involved in academic programs, a program of continuing education, and graduates who exercise independent judgment. This paper takes each of these areas in turn and examines them for indigenous languages teachers with the view of documenting that they are in a profession worthy of recognition and certification by states and tribes.

Jon Reyhner

There are many topics in the field of language preservation. Each topic deserves attention in and of itself, such as how is language taught, where is language taught, is ceremonial language included, and can we teach other subjects in this language. This paper addresses the professional preparation of teachers of indigenous languages.

A defined area of competence

The career field component of language education has long been dominated by the people who study language, linguists. Prior to incorporating Native American language in the education of young people, the linguists devoted their lives to studying and making sense of the languages. There is a component of linguistic thought that has devoted itself to the preservation of the more than four hundred Native American languages and dialects that were present in this continent at the time of first European contact. Their work has been invaluable to the people who are today attempting to bring language back into common usage. Many extinct Native American dialects have volumes of information in dictionaries and grammars that were produced by field linguists. The field notes alone are integral pieces to reestablishing the older forms of the languages in their most complete detail. However, linguists have been frus-

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trated in their efforts to assist in language preservation. As any student who has taken an introduction to linguistics can testify, the field is dependent on a technical language of its own.

The fluent speakers of language today are from families where the language survived despite direct federal government efforts to eradicate it. Among the Salish and Kootenai languages, the speakers of either language are older than nontraditional college students. At Salish Kootenai College the average student is a single female, twenty-nine years old, with two and a half children. Most of our speakers are from 50 to 80 years old. Today, there are few fluent Salish younger speakers.

Not all fluent speakers want to teach language. It is difficult for anyone to go into a classroom and face 20 to 30 bright energetic students and teach them a language that few of them have heard. One of the teachers of Kootenai language had the experience of a child telling him that he could not be in his class any longer, because his father said he did not want him to learn that language. That teacher is no longer teaching in the public schools, even though the language program he worked in only offered his class once a week for half an hour to kindergarten and first grade students. A negative experience while teaching is common to all of us who teach. To a fluent speaker, it is one more negative in a lifetime of negative attitude against the language of the home. For many, this is unacceptable, and they leave teaching.

The numbers of people who are developing a passion for learning Native American language is growing exponentially. Some, like me, have come to this passion from a realization that language reeducation is an integral part of knowing who we are—identity. When I began taking classes in Salish, it was the fulfillment of a promise casually made when I was in high school. A friend of mine who was fluent said he would teach me if I wanted to learn. I promised him I would, but could not right then. That friend went on to the armed forces, business training, and became director of the Flathead Culture Committee until his death last year. My first class was with him as my teacher. It felt good to fulfill such a long ago promise. As my skill gained, I discovered how good it made me feel in my 'heart of hearts' to begin understanding my heritage language.

My mother was a full-blood—Chippewa, Mohawk, Pottowatamie, and Kickapoo from Kansas—enrolled on the Kickapoo Reservation and my father was Salish and Welsh, enrolled on the Flathead Reservation. Although I have always claimed my enrollment and affinity with my father's reservation, my mixed heritage has always been a source of internal conflict. I was unclear about my heritage and unsure how I fit in on my home reservation. Learning Salish gave me the opportunity to explore my identity, come into contact with the elders, and gain pride in learning to communicate. Salish language provided insight into the culture in ways that books, work, and politics cannot do. In Salish there are no words that are equivalent to "I'm sorry." A fluent speaker would interpret that fact differently than someone who is from the dominant American culture. To a fluent person, it implies that you live without a need to

say "I'm sorry." How different this country would be today had that one fact guided all of us—if we lived in such a way to not need to make apologies.

Language preservation efforts place tremendous pressures on teachers of language. The pressures of setting and students affect who will teach and the skills that are needed. There are people who teach every day and are not called teachers. There are others who are called teachers who are unable to pass their knowledge to more than a few of their students. This is true in all teaching fields, but even more of an issue in Native American language owing to the small numbers of fluent speakers, the task at hand, and the lack of clarity in the field. Native American language teaching combines elements of foreign language methods, English as a second language (ESL), bilingual, and traditional culture teaching styles and methods.

An organized and important body of knowledge

As the director and grant writer for the bilingual department at Salish Kootenai College (SKC), I had a unique perspective into the complexity of the task that language preservation poses. The original bilingual teacher training proposal was a joint effort with the University of Montana and SKC to the Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA). As work progressed, it became apparent the locus of control needed to be within the reservation. With more than misgivings, a grant application was prepared from SKC alone. During the six years of operation under this funding, an Associate of Arts Degree was developed and institutionalized that met the criteria for OBEMLA programs.

There are many facets to community development in a reservation setting, and if languages are to be preserved today, it will require the whole community. Although there have been many classes, the languages have been written, and many elders have worked hard, we have not yet produced a body of newly fluent speakers. Ignoring the controversy over the definition of fluency for the moment, language students are beginning to stay in the language and carry on conversations with each other or a fluent speaker. Only recently are we seeing new speakers who can, after thought, create a sentence of their own; a skill that a two- to three-year old child acquires through loving acceptance of their baby talk by their parents. Even then, there is a need to have a fluent speaker verify its accuracy. Even people who are recognized as fluent can be fearful of saying the "wrong" thing. Within this extensive body of knowledge, there are eleven identified roles to be addressed in the community (Pace, Smith & Mills, 1991, p. 231):

1. Administrator—The administrative role assumes that there is an organization (loosely defined) that will "do" language preservation. For the purpose of this paper, the tribal administration would fill this role. Within the tribe there are two Culture Committees, one Salish and one Kootenai, whose function is to preserve and practice their respective cultures. These entities, with linguistic assistance, have developed writing systems for their languages. They teach and

recommend teachers when requested. Language is only one of many duties that the committees have been assigned.

2. Evaluator—Evaluation of language preservation has not formally occurred. Everyone who is teaching, learning, or watching has an opinion about how well the process is progressing. Several years ago, the bilingual department conducted a language use survey that documented the "self-reported" responses on language use by approximately ten percent (10%) of the voting age tribal member households. The survey indicated a high level of interest in learning language, preferences in materials, classes, and teaching styles. It also indicated a high level of use at the most rudimentary language level that surprised the researchers. There are discussions that would best happen either prior to further evaluation, or as a product of evaluation, to clarify definitions, identify success indicators, and communicate with the various entities involved.

3. HRD Manager—Human resource development management is monitoring progress and interrelationships of the many components and roles in the organization. In language preservation, an informal attempt is made to do the same. There is a need to manage language preservation by centralizing knowledge and information for the various entities involved and monitoring progress. In most cases, language planning has not yet become an intentional effort.

4. Individual Career Development Advisor—Careers in language development exist informally. Preservation is a community process without central coordination at this time. Teachers of language may be formally employed by the tribes, a department of the tribe, the college, a community group, or the public schools. The college, the culture committee, and the education department of the tribe have provided advice to prospective teachers. All too often, advice does not incorporate all aspects of the profession. There is a need to coordinate and standardize career advising procedures for language preservation.

5. Instructor/Facilitator—Instructor/facilitators are needed to teach language to the community in many different settings and at all age levels. The function of instruction is multilevel. Instructor/facilitators are needed to teach the teachers. The teaching of teachers is the crux of the current problem in language preservation. Who will teach? Being a fluent speaker alone does not guarantee a skillful teacher. How will they teach? Numerous teaching methods have been promoted. Unfortunately, each method has been introduced as if it were the "best." When the current method in favor proves to be less than a miraculous turnaround for students, the method gains disfavor and is abandoned. An understanding of the multitude of teaching methods, both contemporary and traditional needs to be gained.

6. Marketer—Language preservation needs marketing skills! Both teachers and learners would benefit from knowing the benefits of dual language skill. In the bilingual education field, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are promoted. The distinctions are specific and integral to the recognition of personal and communal benefits of language acquisition. There are standard textbooks available such as Colin Baker's (1993) *Foundations of Bilingual Education*

and Bilingualism that describe efforts at bilingual education worldwide and research works such as Joshua Fishman's (1991) *Reversing Language Shift* that describe efforts to revitalize minority indigenous languages worldwide.

7. Materials Developer—Materials in the native languages for reading and instruction are needed. The process of developing written forms of indigenous languages is immense. Everything from alphabet material to the local news needs to have ongoing development. Students need to see and hear the language in all areas of life, or at least in some well defined areas of life that are important to them. Age and skill appropriate materials are needed.

8. Needs analyst—Formal needs assessments and analyses of the field of language reintroduction could provide valuable direction for each community. Pieces and segments of information and knowledge need to be compiled to assist language preservation efforts from the formal program aspect and the seldom documented traditional aspect. Learner expectations need to be assessed and compared to the goals of language instruction. Frequently, the nonnative language student will surpass the native student in a class. The nonnative student has less fear and more reasonable expectations—less personal baggage.

9. Organizational Change Agent—Language preservation and reintroduction is organizational change and community development for Native Americans. The centuries of cultural genocide and assimilation efforts are in direct conflict with reintroduction of language. One of the appeals of this field to me personally is the belief in the impact of language to our communities. I believe the intentional demise of culture and language can be countered by intentional effort.

10. Program Designer—Given the complexity of language preservation, program designers are needed to strategize efforts, plan training of teachers, plan preservation, initiate research, and advise administrators. The wealth of source information has not been synthesized. Cross-curricular knowledge can be organized to facilitate language preservation efforts in a community.

11. Researcher—Research is needed to better understand the current language dilemma. The field has been woefully neglected for Native Americans. This is ironic considering the volume of social research that is done with these same people. Several years ago, the Tribal Education Committee on the Flathead Reservation proposed a resolution to the Tribal Council requiring all research involving Native American children be submitted for approval prior to use in the local schools. This policy was developed to reduce the high volume of research being done with children that included false or stereotypical questions or conclusions. To conduct language research will require knowledge of the players, the language, and the culture.

The many roles in the field of language preservation have not been identified and addressed well. Owing to the lack of paid positions, a few people have attempted to be all things to all people and have done so with inadequate training. The above mentioned roles will need to be addressed as communities endeavor to bring native language back to full health.

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Identified with a career field

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the SKC Bilingual Department was to validate the study of teaching for Native American languages. SKC offered both Salish and Kootenai languages since its founding in the 1970's. Teachers for the classes were chosen from fluent speakers recommended by the culture committees who were willing to come into a classroom. With the inclusion of the degree program, many of the fluent speakers who taught looked to the program to produce people that would ease their burden. As it has become more accepted to learn our native tongues, the demand for teachers escalated. Some teachers were trying to work with everyone from kindergarten to adult and beginner to advanced. The Salish and Kootenai language alphabets were developed in the late 1970's through the culture committees working with linguists.

Many tribes in the Northwest United States are struggling with the same process of preservation and reintroduction, and many of their languages are also newly written. This does not imply that work has only begun. Ethnographers have compiled language information since early European contact. Some of the best sources are from the missionaries in the region. Father Giorda, a Jesuit priest, compiled a dictionary for the Kalispel language around the turn of the century. These obscure documents are difficult to access, and many are no longer in print.

There are various associations that are interested in language issues. The list that follows is not intended to be exhaustive, but will give a sample of the diversity of interest.

- International Native Languages Institute (INLI) [formerly the Native American Languages Issues (NALI) Institute] is an organization of Natives involved in language preservation activities. There is usually an annual conference. The 15th annual institute was held in Mille Lacs, Minnesota, in April, 1996.
- American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI) is currently located at the University of Arizona and offers a summer session devoted to classes in how to teach indigenous languages and developing indigenous language curriculum (see McCarty et al., this volume).
- Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposiums (SILS) were sponsored in 1994, 1995, and 1997 at Northern Arizona University to bring together native language educators and activists to share ideas to promote the use of their languages. The proceedings of the first two symposium were published as the monograph *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages* (Cantoni, 1996).
- National Indian Education Association (NIEA) is an organization of educators, and language is one of the many fields of education in which they are interested.
- National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) is an organization of bilingual educators across the nation. Native American language educators represent a small contingent within this orga-

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nization. The Winter 1995 issue of their *Bilingual Research Journal* was a special issue on Indigenous Language Education and Literacy.

Various colleges are also involved in varying degrees of language preservation activities. The majority that are working directly with Native American language are in the Southwest—Northern Arizona University, University of New Mexico, and Colorado State University. The Northern tribes in the East, such as the Ojibway, have worked with the University of Minnesota. In the Northwest, the University of Washington has done some work. In Canada, there are the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. The work with tribes seems to begin with the Linguistic or Native American Studies departments in a higher education unit. The department that initiates work tends to then determine the kind of work that is done. Too often, it is not an interdepartmental effort to look at the whole situation.

Tribal colleges in the past twenty years have taken a lead role in language education. They are institutions accredited by the same entity that accredits other higher education organizations, and many of them include language classes. Diné College (formerly Navajo Community College) has recently developed a four year teacher preparation program that includes a 21 credit Navajo language speaking/reading/writing/ teaching component. This program gives their graduates an Arizona bilingual teaching endorsement as well as an Arizona teaching certificate. Part of the difficulty in creating such a process, especially for smaller tribes, is the lack of college educated people knowledgeable in language to teach the language and train others to teach. Many tribes, unlike the Navajo, are in the same situation as the Flathead Reservation, which is a confederation of tribes with three dialects of Salish and one of the five dialects of Kootenai.

Salish Kootenai College offered six different Native American languages during the 1995-96 school year—Salish, Kootenai, Blackfoot, Cree, Assiniboine, and Northern Cheyenne. Two of the languages are not taught this year owing to students/teachers completing and moving back home. The four-year programs at the college require two quarters of a tribal language. I believe this is the only higher education entity to have this volume of languages represented. The Saskatchewan Federated College does offer coursework for Native American linguists in Cree language.

There are several linguistic associations that meet to discuss and share information about Native American languages. The International Congress on Salish and Neighboring Languages (ICSNL) has been meeting for thirty-one years. At each meeting there are papers presented and discussed. Larry and Terry Thompson and Dale Kincaid are the linguists who founded the organization and are active in presentations and proceedings. Many other linguists are involved, including all of the linguists that have worked with the Salish and Kootenai from the Flathead Reservation. The work is invaluable, but difficult to access. Linguistic studies need interpretation for the lay person, and even

some Native American "informants" barely recognize work they helped coauthor when the technical terminology is included. The Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages (SSILA) provides news of other conferences and language groups, summaries of presentations, and professional direction. This organization is sponsored through Victor Golla at Humbolt State University in California.

After passage of the Native American Language Act of 1992, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) through its Administration for Native Americans (ANA) Department has awarded grants to tribes and entities working in language preservation. The efforts have varied widely. As a proposal reader when the program began, I was encouraged that so many efforts were in progress. The demand for people to work in the ANA programs has increased pressure on fluent speakers.

The most important people to be working in language preservation are the elders of the tribes. The eldest speaker of the Salish dialect on the Flathead Reservation is one hundred years old. During his lifetime he has been forbidden to use his first language, learned English, served in the armed forces in World War I, helped to build Kerr Dam on the Flathead River, and is now asked to guide tribal decision-making and language teaching. He now speaks mostly Salish once again with his daughter as interpreter. The tremendous change in attitude toward the use of Native American languages in the last few decades is historical information to language learners, but for many teachers, it is their life experience.

The question is not whether Native American Language Preservation is a field of study or not, it is the segment of the field for which each person is most suited and chooses to address.

Competent individuals enter the profession

Linguists are highly specialized individuals with formal academic preparation, programs, and associations. They contribute an invaluable service to language preservation over time and in the preparation of historical and language materials.

Fluent speakers gain their skill as children. By the time they consider teaching, they are so familiar with their language that it becomes challenging to explain it to the novice learner. Last year the Montana Board of Public Instruction created a Class 7 Specialist Certificate for Native American Language. Fluent speakers can file their form and fees with the blessing from their tribe to teach their language in the public schools. Each tribe is responsible for establishing criteria by which they recommend speakers. In Montana there are seven reservations with eleven different languages. The range of criteria begins with anyone who is recognized fluent on one reservation to a college degree on another. The difference is in the "health" of the language they will teach. The college degree program is required on the Crow reservation where there are still children who learn the language as their first language before they begin school.

It is difficult for the university philosophy to accommodate the needs of Native American language teachers. For many reasons few fluent speakers have college training to enable them to teach at a university; some do not even have a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Education has played a major role in the demise of indigenous languages, and in spite of good intentions, it is not likely that older speakers will pursue the formal academic approach. In the best of all worlds, fluent speakers will be able to teach many academic subjects through a Native American language.

Principles and practices supported by research

The various separate elements of foreign language methods, English as a second language (ESL), and bilingual education have extensive historical and research foundations. Organizations such as the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE) and the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) have extensive collections of studies available for research and application. Traditional cultural teaching styles and methods are documented in stories and the memories of elders, ethnography, and limited writings. To teach by storytelling is a central tenet of whole language instruction (see for example Routman, 1988). Today's teachers study whole language, but are unaware of Native American story telling. As schools struggle with de-emphasizing competition, the cooperative learning methodology has developed. Traditionally, young Native Americans were instructed in a group by an elder.

Jim Cummins (1989) has worked extensively with language reintroduction in Canada. Joshua Fishman (1991, 1996) has worked with Yiddish. Stephen Krashen (see Krashen & Terrell, 1983) has been instrumental in the distinction between learning and acquiring language. We are able to look to programs that are working. Ireland, Israel, New Zealand, and Hawai'i have paved the path for language preservation. Michael Krauss (1996) of Alaska has done extensive research on Native American languages. All of these examples are rich supporting puzzle pieces that are difficult to access for our elders. It is not a lack of research, but the need to understand and share success that should guide research.

Extensive research is available concerning the academic performance of Native American students in public school. During the past year, the media reported findings that indicate today's boarding schools provide a less than average academic program. What is lacking is an analyses and synthesis of the various fields and methods.

Involvement of professionals in academic programs

Each tribe and language group have people working in language preservation. The complexity of professional positions varies greatly depending on the health of the language. On the one extreme is Diné College offering Navajo language teacher training. On the other extreme is the newspaper report of the death of the last speaker of an Alaskan Native language group a little over a

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year ago. Most indigenous language groups are somewhere between these two extremes.

On the Flathead Reservation, classes are offered ranging from an early childhood immersion program to college courses. Ceremonial language is taught in both languages through ceremony. A few families are again attempting to teach infants the Native language at least with English if not in place of English. With radio and television in the homes, it is almost impossible to avoid English usage. The more challenging task is for speakers to keep in the language. The pilot programs in immersion programs last summer demonstrated this difficulty. SKC maintains the bilingual Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree under its current catalog and is offering coursework. The Flathead and Kootenai Culture Committees respectively offer informal courses in their respective languages. Many gatherings utilize more and more language without translation. The Salish choir is active in the Catholic church and at tribal wakes and gatherings. Materials are randomly developed in the public schools, the culture committees, the college, Head Start, and other community groups. The college prepared a computer assisted instructional program utilizing traditional stories, drawing, and voice recordings.

The demand for professionals to work in language preservation is increasing at the same time availability of fluent speakers is decreasing.

A program of continuing education

The Class 7 certificate in Montana is renewable like all other teaching certificates. This means that each Class 7 specialist must take 60 renewal credits within five years of the first certificate to be eligible to renew. The controversy at this time is how they will pursue their renewal credits. The agreement is a unique compromise with the state giving certification without an academic college degree, and the tribes acknowledging the right of the state to certify tribal language teachers to teach in public schools.

The skill of a "traditional" fluent speaker teacher can be validated as contemporary methods that parallel their methods are explained. Most people who assume a teaching role soon realize that children are not the same in some aspects as when they were children. All teachers need to understand the changes and learn skills to address these children. Morris Massey (1979) examines the influences that affect whole generations of people. His work is a thought-provoking look at values, generational programming, and gut-level biases. An example is the thriftiness exhibited by people who survived the "great depression." I believe there are parallel events in Native American history that have impacted generations, such as land allotment, boarding schools, and relocation programs. The current generation is affected by the all-encompassing technological world in which they live. As a teacher, I am grateful when new ideas to reach my students are shared.

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Graduates who exercise independent judgment

People who are prepared to intentionally influence language preservation will be challenged by the circumstances in which they are thrust. Proposing language preservation as a profession provides some opportunities not previously available. Synthesis of the various fields of knowledge that impact the effort will validate and challenge the field. As we are prepared to meet the challenge, teachers will need a "bag of tools" for language instruction to meet needs of students of all ages and in many settings. As language revives in our communities, more examples will be available and more challenges will become apparent.

Conclusion

Language preservation and human resource development are parallel professional fields. Human resource development is becoming a field of study and a profession. I believe language preservation is in its infancy, and yet, is battling the looming extinction of rich cultural perspectives carried by the community language. As indigenous language teachers and activists become more knowledgeable in classroom instructional strategies and ways to energize community efforts, they will become more effective. I am honored and excited to have the opportunity to assist in this process of reviving and revitalizing American Indian languages.

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